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INFORMATION LITERACY COMPETENCIES AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF MYSORE CITY

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Abstract

Information literacy is very important, especially in the field of education where the students required to be updated in accessing the information and knowledge required for their academic work. This is possible only with the development of information literacy competencies. With this point in view, in the present study an attempt is made to assess the Information literacy competencies among the undergraduate students of Mysore city. The main objective of the study was to determine the student's Information literacy competencies such as, ability to access the information, ability to identify different information resources and the awareness about search strategies. The authors highlight on the problems of students in accessing information and attempt to know the preferred mode accessing information. Data analysis and interpretation was done on the feedback received from the students.

Keywords: Information literacy, Undergraduate students

1. Introduction

We are living in the era of information where the information sources are proliferating at a faster rate than ever before and still accelerating. The amount of information is increasing due to the rapid developments in the field of Information and Communication Technology. With this developments, information is available in various forms, such as multimedia, including graphical, aural and textual etc. In order to access and use different types of sources effectively, people must be information literate. Information literacy is made up of two words “Information”- and “Literacy”. Information is the data and literacy is one's ability to read, write and understand. Literacy is an important tool to participate in information literacy activities. In terms of computer and network environment, information literacy is related to the ability to access, process and use information effectively.

The concept of information literacy has been defined and interpreted in various ways by several authors in different perspectives since its inception. As defined by American Library Association in its mission statement for the global information society “Information literacy is a set of abilities requiring individuals to recognize when information is needed and have ability

to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information.” (ALA, 1989). According to **Paul Zurkowski (1974)** “People trained in the application of information resources to their work can be called information literates. They have learned techniques and skills for utilizing the wide range of information tools as well as primary sources in molding information-solutions to their problems”. This work has been complemented by the activities of several other library associations. According to *Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Framework for Information literacy for Higher Education (2004)*, Information literacy is “the set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning”. CAUL (2004) defines “Information literacy is an understanding a set of abilities enabling individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the capacity to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information”.

Collectively, we can say that the information literacy is the ability to recognize the need of information and locate access, use and evaluate information and thereby improve one’s knowledge. Information literacy is also knowing when and why you need information, where to find it, how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner. Information is available through libraries, community resources, special interest organization, media, and the internet and information comes to individuals in an unfiltered format, raising questions about its authenticity, validity, and reliability. Information literacy forms the basis for continuous and lifelong learning. It is common to all learning environments, and to all levels of education.

2. Need and significance of the study

In the present context of information revolution, access to information has become vital for the enriching knowledge in the field of education. In order to carry qualitative improvements in education, most of the universities in the country are offering a distinctive credit bearing course integrated into regular curriculum to educate the students and enhance their skills on use of learning resources, techniques of information retrieval, use of e-resources and also to expose them to various sources of information. (Nina Singh, 2014). For retrieving and using information in a judicious way, requires the ability to read, write, evaluate and comprehending skills. Thus, Information literacy is required due to ongoing proliferation of information resources and the variable methods of access. Information literacy is very important for every human’s life, education, and business activities etc. The need for information literacy is very essential to locate, to access, to recognize the information. It is also important to use the resources in a judicious manner and to follow the ethical and moral rules of information access. Information literacy is important in this age because it allows us to survive by giving us the

skills to know when we need information and where to locate it effectively and efficiently. It includes the technological skills needed to use the modern library as a gateway to information. It enables us to evaluate and assess the information we find, thus giving us confidence in using that information to make a decision. (ACRL, 2000).

But, unfortunately, in the current situation, it is generally observed that the college students are entering college and university without basic information competence skills i.e the ability to locate, use, evaluate, and ethically use the information. Students may have the skills to send electronic mail, chat, and download some files and music, but many have not learned how to effectively locate information, use in their work or give proper credit for the information used. Moreover, in order to show some improvement in the quality of their work, students should become more confident in their ability to complete assignments, carry out research projects, and become active, independent learner. Thus, the periodical Information literacy skills assessment helps to measure and monitor students. Performance, reflect upon the teaching-learning process; provides input for revision and development of the curriculum. Keeping the above facts in the view, in the present study an attempt is made to study the information literacy skills among the undergraduate students.

3. Review of literature

Mugyabuso Lwehabura (2016) have examined the information literacy skills and the challenges and problems faced in searching the information among postgraduate students of Saoine University of Agriculture. The findings showed that although information literacy exists among students, a good number of students demonstrated significant deficiency in their information literacy knowledge and skills in key aspects of searching for information from electronic sources, Rajinder Kumar and Anil Kumar (2014) conducted a study to know the information literacy paradigm among the research scholars at CCS Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar (India). Devendra Singh and Manoj Joshi (2013) assessed the Information literacy competency of postgraduate students at Haryana Agricultural University along with the impact of instruction initiatives. The results of the study has been found satisfactory along with significant difference between the first and second year students. In addition, various instruction initiatives were found to have a positive impact upon the Information literacy Competencies of Postgraduate students. Similar studies by Sharma (2010) assessed the Information Literacy competency among PG students, research scholars and teachers of Punjab agricultural university. The objectives of the study was to rate the ability of users to identify the need and nature of information, the efficiency in acquiring information, critical evaluation of information and skill of organizing information. The results showed that majority of users

were able to access, use and organize the information efficiently and showed that, the population taken for study is information literate except a very few who were found lagging behind. Hadimani and Rajgoli (2010) conducted a study on Information Literacy competency among the undergraduate students of college of Agriculture, Raichur, Karnataka. The study revealed that the majority of the respondents had the ability to recognize the need for information, locate the needed information, competence to evaluate and use of information and developing appropriate search strategies. It was found in the study conducted by Sajjadur Rehman and Sumayyah Alfaresi (2009) that majority of the students lacked skills in catalogue searching and its use, selection of information sources, formulation of search strategies, and selection of pertinent sources.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study was to assess the information literacy competency among the Undergraduate students. In order to achieve the main objective the following objectives are formulated.

1. To know the level of awareness about the search strategies among the undergraduate students.
2. To Identify the ability to access the information among the undergraduate students
3. To know the ability to identify the different sources of information among the undergraduate students.
4. To know the level of awareness about the ethical issues while using information among the undergraduate students
5. To identify the problems encountered by the students while accessing the information resources.

4. Methodology of the study

Random sampling technique was used to select the sample. The total of 200 undergraduate students were selected from 6 Degree colleges from Mysore city. A questionnaire prepared by the investigators was used to collect the required data. Around 210 questionnaires were distributed to the undergraduate students. Among 210 students, 202 have responded with the response rate of 96.43%. 200 responses were considered for the final analysis.

5. Data analysis and interpretation

Data analysis and interpretation is done taking the responses of the students in to consideration. The same has been systematically analyzed and presented in the paper.

5.1 Frequency of visits to College library

On the basis of the frequency of the visits to the college library by the students, we can judge the use of library resources by the students. Therefore, in the present study an attempt has been made to obtain information on how frequently the students visit the college library in the course of their study.

Table 1: Frequency of visits to college Library by the students

Frequency of visit to Library	No. of students	Percentage (%)
Every day	33	16.5
Once in a week	90	45
Every fortnight	22	11
Once in a month	42	21
Very rarely	13	6.5

It is found that, out of 200 students, majority of the students i.e. 90 (45%) visit to the library once in week followed by 42(21%) visit library once in a month. 33(16.5%) students visit the library every day followed by very less number of students i.e. 22(11%) visit once in fortnight and 13 (6.5%) students visit library rarely. Thus, the data shows that on an average, the majority of the students visit the library either once in week or once in a month.

5.2 Search Strategies among the students

Table 2: Search strategies used by the students in the library

Mode of Information Retrieval	No. of students	Percentage (%)
Through Library catalogue	64	32
Consulting Library staff	36	18
Guidance from Teachers	26	13
Reference list	44	22
Bibliographies	30	15

From Table 2, it was found that the majority of the students, i.e. 64(32%) use library catalogue followed by followed by 44 (22) students use the reference list, 36 (18%) students stated they consult library staff followed by 30 (15%) students use Bibliography. Lastly, very less number of students 26(13%) stated that took guidance from the faculty members to locate the information.

5.3 Ability to access the Information

Table 3: Ability of the students to access the Information

Statements	SA	Ag	DK	DA	SD
I am able to identify the need of information	94 (47%)	102 (50.5%)	4 (2%)	00 (00)	00 (00)
I know how to locate information sources in the library	74 (37%)	104 (52%)	8 (4%)	4 (2%)	00 (00)
I use alternative methods for getting resources to procure information resources.	54 (27%)	83 (41.5%)	26 (13%)	32 (16%)	5 (2.5%)

*SA-Strongly agree; Ag-Agree; DK-Don't know; DA- Disagree; SD- Strongly disagree

**Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage.

It is clearly observed from Table 3 that, out of 200 students, 102 (50.5%) agreed and 94 (47%) strongly agreed with the statement that they can identify the need of information. 104(52%) students agreed and 74 (37%) strongly agreed that they know how to locate information sources within the library and majority of the students i.e 83(41.5%) agreed that they use alternative methods for procuring information resources which they cannot find in the library.

5.4 Ability to identify different sources of Information

Table 4: Ability of the students to identify different sources of Information

Statements	SA	Ag	DK	DA	SD
I am able to differentiate among primary, secondary and tertiary sources of information	86 (43%)	74 (37%)	32 (16%)	8 (2%)	0 (00)
I know the difference between a peer reviewed journal and popular magazine	40 (20%)	58 (29%)	96 (48%)	6 (3%)	00 (00)
I prefer using more e-resources than the printed sources of information	114 (57%)	66 (33%)	12 (6%)	8 (4%)	0 (00)

*SA-Strongly agree; Ag-Agree; DK-Don't know; DA- Disagree; SD- Strongly disagree

**Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage

It is clearly observed from the Table 4 that, majority of the students i.e. 86 (43%) agreed and 74(37%) students strongly agreed with the statement that they can differentiate between primary, secondary and tertiary sources of information. As high as 96 (48%) students said that they do not know the difference between a peer reviewed and popular magazine followed by 58(29%) students agreed that they know the difference. Majority of the students i.e 114(57%) strongly agreed that they use more e-resources than the printed sources of information followed by 66 (33%) students agreed for the same statement. Only 8(4%) students disagreed with the statement which means that they prefer to use printed sources than the electronic resources.

5.5 Problems encountered in searching information

Table 5: Problems encountered by the students in searching the information

Problems	No. of students	Percentage (%)
Lack of knowledge about information retrieval	108	54
Difficulty in locating the sources in library	87	43.5
Lack of knowledge about the resources available in Library	76	38
Lack of Time	35	17.5
Unfamiliarity with Search strategies	64	32
Lack of ICT knowledge	58	29
Access denied for downloading information from the website	54	27

The data presented in table 5 reveals about the problems encountered by the students in acquiring information resources. For each statement, students had to answer by indicating “yes” or “No”. It was found that 108 (54%) students lack knowledge about information retrieval, and 87(43.5%) students found difficulty in locating the sources in the library. 76 (38%) students stated that they lack knowledge about the resources available in the library and only 35(17.5%) students stated that they have shortage of time to locate the information in the library. It was found that 64 (32%) students are unfamiliar with search strategies, 58 (29%) stated that they have poor level of ICT knowledge and 54 (27%) students stated about access denied for some web sites. From the table 5, it is clear that the major problem in locating the information in the library is lack of knowledge about the information retrieval and the difficulty in locating the sources in the library

6. Major findings of the study

1. Majority of the undergraduate students (45%) visit the library once in a week and a very less number of students (6.5%) visit the library very rarely.
2. Majority of the Undergraduate students (32%) use Library catalogue as the major search strategy and a small number of students (13%) take guidance from teachers to search information in the library.
3. It is clearly observed that nearly 47 percent strongly agreed that they can identify the need of information and 37 strongly agreed that they know how to locate information sources within the library and majority of the students i.e. 41.5 percent agreed that they use alternative methods for procuring information resources.

7. It is clearly observed that, majority of the students i.e. 86 (43%) agreed and 74(37%) students strongly agreed that they can differentiate between primary, secondary and tertiary sources of information.
8. As high as 48 percent of students said that they do not know the difference between a peer reviewed and popular magazine.
9. Majority of the students (57%) strongly agreed that they use more e-resources than the printed sources of information.
10. It is clear from the study that the major problem in locating the information in the library is lack of knowledge about the information retrieval and the difficulty in locating the sources in the library.

Implications

It is found from the study that, less number of students are aware of using different search strategies to find the resources. Hence, the college library authorities have to make it possible for the students to focus more on improving their search skills to retrieve resources effectively by conducting training programmes. It was observed in the study that the students lack proper guidance in accessing and using the information in a proper way. Hence, the library authorities and library professionals must ensure in providing proper guidance to the students to search information sources in the library.

Conclusion

Due to information explosion and paradigm shift towards electronic media and resources have changed the needs of the users as well as the responsibility of librarians. Demand for highly skilled hands have highlighted the need for information related competencies. The importance of information literacy program to the students has become the necessity for the optimum use of the available resources for all learning environments and to all levels of higher education. For students, Information literacy competency would facilitate independent learning, creates greater responsibility among their own learning and helps to become self-learners and develops critical thinking skills. Hence, the need of Information literacy has become the necessity to students for the effective use of the available resources at higher education level.

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